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SUBJECT: MINISTER OF HEALTH LEADS NATION-WIDE
TOUR TO DJIBOUTI'S HEALTH CENTERS

1. (U) From June 15 through July 22, Minister of Health Abdallah Miguil, led an important and large delegation on a tour of rural Djibouti, visiting all rural health posts and district hospitals. His delegation included the Minister of Women's Affairs, Acha Robleh, Representatives of WHO, UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA, UNDP, and UNHCR, the Chief of Party of the USAID-funded "Expanded Coverage of Essential Health Services" project, as well as other Ministry of Health officials.

2. (U) The Minister of Health outlined the five main reasons behind the tour:

--To have the central authority at the Ministerial level, as well as donors and partners, see first hand the population and the conditions that exist in rural areas of the country.

--To see what the main problems were, so that better decision making could take place. For instance, the four most common problems observed were lack of medicine, lack of personnel, no functioning health information system, and no dialogue between health personnel and the community.

--To have all stakeholders see and discuss together, what might be done in order to remedy the above, observed problems. As a result of a lack of personnel in many rural health posts, the Minister, in consultation with Ministry officials, partners and donors, decided to appoint new nurses to all health posts that lacked them. These appointments were made immediately upon completion of the last tour to Obock district, in late July. These nurses are all trained at the central level, with diplomas in hand.

--To claim the title of first Minister of Health in Djibouti to visit the entire country.

--To confirm that the need for water is one of the greatest needs in the rural areas of the country. Through this tour, he and his delegation saw that water was one of the most pressing needs for all communities, and of extreme importance in order to have a properly functioning health post.

3. (U) The Minister's tour was important in revitalizing Djibouti's health sector, in particular the rural health posts and district hospitals. In addition to the central themes of the tour, outlined above, the Minister is re-evaluating health care delivery policy at all levels. For instance, his Ministry has already begun to train district hospital doctors and staff on obstetric procedures, as lack of complicated-delivery service at district hospitals was cited as a serious problem in rural areas.

4. (U) After discussing the report as well as details of the trip with the Chief of Party for USAID's "Expanded Coverage of Essential Health Services" project, USAID and the Ministry developed the following recommendations:

--The Ministry of Health needs to review and assure the supply, as well as the kind of medicines available in health posts.

--The Ministry of Health needs to assure the supervision of both health posts and district hospitals. Currently, there is no supervision or even a plan to supervise. The district teams do not know how to organize themselves, which would facilitate supervision, so a training plan is needed as well as strong central leadership to see it through.

--The Ministry of Health needs to reinforce district management of the rural health infrastructure. This would assist in plans for decentralization, and to make the health care delivery system at the district level, work better.

--The Ministry of Health needs to reinforce and build-up the health information system. Currently, the health information system is non-existent, except in a few health centers and hospitals, but not in a systematic, and uniform manner, and particularly not in any rural health posts.

5. (U) Comment: Through current USAID activities, an opportunity exists to assist the Ministry of Health achieve some of these outlined objectives and recommendations. Other objectives and recommendations may be more appropriately addressed as part

of a new strategy, after discussions with stakeholders and partners.
End comment.